judgment, by:means of which experience is transfigured into refinement. -
It was, a self-deluded, almost romantically ignorant Isabel, who chose -
to marry Osmond, but it is a refined and consciously responsible Isabel
who, for the second time, chooses to return to her husband. James
seems to say that the polarised patterns of choice, which dominate
the human personality, can be connected by the institution of marriage.
The marriage-tie acquires a sanctity for Isabel because she recognizes
it as the fruit of moral choice and responsibility. Maggie Vcrver, in"
The Golden Bow/, faces a similar situation, and acquires a similar
refinement of her consciousness. What happens to Isabel after her
return to her husband is not known, but as James indicates, she has'
already become transfigured as the 'heiress of all ages'. For in the
redeemed, self-redeemed Isabel, the refinement of consciousness is
completed in such a manner that the stage is set for the promptitude
of the spirit to meet the possibilities of the self, and for the readiness
of the self to yield to the intimations of the spirit, and for the united
readiness of both to reach forth the yet winder adventures of life,
the world and the universe, whereby cumulative error becomes trans-
formed into a consolidated virtue of vision.

James hints at the truth that the absence of refinement makes
one's culture an inactive gift of nature which can easily convert itself
into moral delusion and further into active evil. The total absence of
moral awareness in Osmond makes it difficult for one to suppose that
Isabel would still make a success of her marriage. The Prince, on the
contrary, in *The Golden BowJ,* makes it possible for Maggie to reform
him by his accessibility to moral infuence. Isabel's dark sojourn back
to her husband is thus the beginning of other possible journeys into
light which Henry James traces in the later novels.

Refinement for the Jamesian protagonists lies in their acquir-
ing a knowledge of the truth of life. The questing protagonists are
awakened to the infinite possibilities of the self, and to the importance

of their being true to it. Henry James projects the idea of refinement in the early novels in terms of the intense awareness, achieved by his protagonists, of the fact that one could brave the world and its disasters by keeping one's selfhood unmutilated and placing it continuously in the difficult but exquisite possibility of attaining self-knowledge. Refinement is enhancement and expansion of consciousness through experience, whereby one learns to be true to oneself. **Fot** the heroes and heroines of James, happiness - not in a material, but